

MAGAZINES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE MAGAZINES

Myths

Folklore is the topic of Yutaka Nakada's well-written article on "Myths and Legends in Japan and the South Seas," published in *Contemporary Japan* (November). The author is a defender of the theory that all the myths of mankind have spread outward from several centers, as opposed to the theory of spontaneous generation among the various tribes. This latter school holds that the resemblance between legends is merely due to the similarity of mental processes. Mr. Nakada proves his point by elucidating the affinity of myths and legends between Japan and the South Sea islands. To cite one example: the story is told in Japan of the hare who wanted to cross a river and cunningly induced the crocodiles to form a row from bank to bank so that he could count their number by stepping over them. A similar story is told among the Indonesians where the place of the hare is taken by a mouse-deer. Papua and New Guinea tribesmen know the story too, with only slight variations. It has probably traveled from south to north, the theory of spontaneous generation being quite unacceptable as there have never been any crocodiles in Japan. There are many more myths and legends related in this article, which makes it most entertaining reading.

Faith and History

Nostradamus, prophet and physician, is one of those figures in history that will never cease to compel interest and that will always return to prominence in times of stress, just as is now the case. For in troubled times everybody wonders what the future has in store, and many turn to Nostradamus for an answer. His prophecies are hidden away in poems of a very involved language and allow of many interpretations. Carlos Lubeck, in "Nostradamus—True Prophet or False?" in the December issue of the *Catholic Review*, concerns himself with the life of this remarkable man, who was born in France in 1533 and died in 1566 after having correctly predicted his own end.

While the dates of Nostradamus' life are all known and his personality comparatively easy to reconstruct, there is much room left for speculation in the case of the Magi, over whose identity Thomas D. Carroll, S.J., reflects in "Who Were The Magi?" in the same issue of the *Catholic Review*. After pointing out that their names and number were pure

invention, the writer examines the question of their nationalities, his only guide being St. Matthew's mention that they came from the east and that they were called "Magi." Both these facts indicate the possibility that they were priests of the Zoroastrian religion. Now Zoroastrianism is the cult of one true god and contains prophecies of a savior, thus resembling the Jewish faith, so that there was some cause for the priests to expect the arrival of Christ. There is, however, no explanation of the star or whatever else it was that led the Magi at just that time to just that place—Bethlehem. We shall never know.

Communications

In the December issue of *Asiana* we read of the fascinating plan of a new railway line through Central Asia connecting Berlin and Tokyo. This project is the outcome of a meeting of the Society of Inquiry into the Central Asia Railway. Although it has long been recognized that a second trans-hemispheric railway is needed, it took the closure of the Siberian railway as a result of the war to shift this problem into the limelight. The idea is to connect Paotow in Inner Mongolia with Bagdad, as Bagdad/Berlin and Paotow/Tokyo railway connections already exist. A map attached to this article shows the proposed route. There are, of course, apart from geographical obstacles, political complications, which will make a completion of the work impossible in countries now under British or Russian control.

The same magazine, which, as usual, contains many interesting items and an excellent selection of photographs, has another article on Central Asia communications. It describes the reconstruction of a highway connecting Russia with India via Baluchistan and Eastern Iran. The road when completed is to carry supplies of war materials to Russia.

Theaters of War

An article on the Philippines published in the December issue of *The Globe* is very timely, appearing as it does at a time when the eyes of the world are turning towards these islands, now one of the centers of fighting in the Pacific war. According to this article, the islands have a population of about 15,000,000, eighty per cent of which are engaged in agriculture. Although only a small section of all arable land is under cultivation, agriculture enjoys most favorable

conditions in these islands, which boast of a fertile soil, a good climate, and a well-developed net of communications. The main crops are rice, maize, tobacco, and sugar. As for mineral resources, gold and iron head a sizeable list, while oil is also found in various places. This article is complemented by two interesting maps, showing the locations of agricultural and mining centers.

Turning to another war theater, we hear of the Dutch East Indies' defense measures, again in the December issue of *Asiana*. How far the Dutch claim to invincibility is justified, only the hour of trial will reveal. Meanwhile it is interesting to keep in mind some of the points of their defense program. Surabaya, this report states, is being fortified in great haste, new naval craft are under construction, and old vessels are being armed. The island of Madura houses powder and ammunition plants, all situated underground as a protection against aerial attacks. In the docks, modern submarines lie waiting, and floating dry docks are being built which are supposed to do double duty by docking flying boats and berthing motor torpedo boats. As to aerial warfare, US\$500,000,000 worth of warplanes have been ordered in the USA—which may or may not arrive in these parts.

China

In his "China, United or Disunited" in *Contemporary Japan* (November), Tsuneo Yonayama divides the problem into two questions, that of internal and external peace. Internal peace, he claims, cannot be separated from China's unification. This in turn would mean the settling of her external issues, thus establishing the general peace between China and Japan which is such an important factor in building a firm basis for the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. From the lessons of Chinese history, the author deduces that unification can only be achieved by force of arms. After giving reasons why neither Chiang Kai-shek nor Wang Ching-wei nor a National Assembly could at present bring about this unification, he pins his faith on a solution by regional peace.

Chen Kung-po reveals the Chinese point of view on the prerequisites for peace in his article "What I Expect of Japan" in *The People's Tribune* (December). His first request is the understanding of China's policies which in the past must have often seemed insincere, due to suspicion and fear. Secondly he pleads for understanding of the Chinese mentality and warns people not to regard China as a disconnected jumble of peoples and states. He says that in spite of lack of nationalism "the traditional sentiment of 'Great Union' has already existed for thousands of years." The political opinions of North and South are basically the same. Thirdly the author em-

phasizes the importance of China's national existence. A free China may be Japan's friend, but, should she cease to exist as such, she would be a well-nigh unbearable burden. The fourth point is the request that Japan, well advanced on the road of progress, may lend a helping hand to slower China.

China's political constitution is the subject of an essay by Jacques Brissac in the December issue of *La Revue Nationale Chinoise*. Tracing the history of the Kuomintang, he finds a revolutionary party mainly supported by Chinese abroad, the first exponents of this party being, with some measure of justification, likened to the reformers of the Meiji period in Japan. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the party, divided Chinese society into three classes, the mandarins, the Kuomintang, and the masses. The mandarins dream of past glories, he said, and the masses do not take an active part in political life, so his group of political elite had to lead the way to realization of his political program. In contrast to Europe, neither the founder of the Kuomintang nor his followers has ever envisaged it as a party of the masses. So, in answer to the question whether China is a democratic country or an authoritarian state, the author finds that China is an *oligarchie spirituelle*.

Manchukuo and Mongolia

"Eighth Concordia Convention" in the November issue of *Manchuria* describes the assembly of this unusual association, a permanent organization acting in unison with the government, embodying national unity and entrusted with the mission of promoting the rule of *Wang-tao*. Its membership includes government officials and citizens, the former occupying all leading positions in the organization.

Lastly some news on "Commercial Development in Inner Mongolia" from the *Far Eastern Review*, the essence of which is that "Mengchiang is being developed so that it can contribute its quota as a member of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." This program has been enforced by means of investments of the Mongolian Government and Japan with the "special" corporations as central factor. Prior to the China incident both commerce and industry in this area had remained at a very primitive level, offering a hotbed for the profiteering activities of Chinese merchants from Peking and Tientsin. Because the program of development had to be pushed with haste following the Japanese occupation, the major efforts have thus far been directed toward the exploitation of mineral resources. But it has now become necessary to promote other industries as well, by a new formula suited to the changed conditions. If these industries are developed according to plan, they will ensure economic independence for Inner Mongolia.—G.